

# John Herrington, Astronaut



*I want to impress upon Native American students that they come from scientists who built structures that still stand today. This is who they are.*

1 John Herrington is a member of Chickasaw Tribe and the first Native American to walk in space. How did he accomplish this? He accomplished this with hard work and support from mentors in his life. A *mentor* is someone with experience who trains and gives advice to a younger person.

2 John was born in Wetumka, Oklahoma in 1958. His family moved a lot during his childhood. In fact, by the time John was a senior in high school he had moved 14 times.

3 After graduating high school, he went to college, but John was more interested in spending time outdoors rock climbing than in his studies. His grades were so low that he was asked to leave college.

4 After leaving college, John got a job on a survey team. Surveyors take measurements of the earth. This data is used by engineers, mapmakers, and construction workers. John enjoyed this job. He realized that he was very good at math and solving real-life problems. He was encouraged by the people he worked with, and by his mentors, to return to college and get a degree in mathematics.

5 John graduated from the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs in 1983. The following year he joined the Navy and became a pilot. He loved being in the Navy and flying planes. While in the Navy, he clocked 3,300 flight hours in 30 different types of

aircraft. He also earned a graduate degree in aeronautical engineering in 1995.

6 John really admired astronauts. He realized that about half of the astronauts at NASA had been Navy test pilots, just like him. This inspired him to apply to NASA. He was accepted into the NASA program in 1995. In 2002, John became the first Native American to walk in space when his shuttle mission visited the International Space Station.

7 In 2005, John left NASA and retired from the Navy to work for Rocketplane Global. In 2007, he left the company to become a speaker and to work with the Chickasaw Nation. He is a board member of AISES-American Indian Science and Engineering Society. This nonprofit organization works to increase the representation of Native Americans in STEM careers. The organization supports students before, during, and after college offering scholarships, internships, and leadership workshops.

8 When John is not speaking or working with the Chickasaw Nation, he enjoys being outside and participating in sports. He continues to do rock climbing as well as snow skiing, running, and cycling.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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1. What might have happened if John hadn't listened to his mentors about going back to college?

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2. Find two details from the passage that support the inference that John likes doing exciting things.

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3. How do you know that helping other Native Americans become successful in science and technology is important to John?

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4. What caused John to apply to NASA?

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